

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 094

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5878

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, CI

SUBJ: LETELIER/MOFFITT CASE: MEDIA ATTENTION SLACKENS

REF: SANTIAGO 9841 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE LETELIER/MOFFITT CASE DROPPED OFF SOMEWHAT AUGUST 4 AND SHOWS SIGNS OF BECOMING MORE NATIONALISTIC. EDITORIAL COMMENT FOCUSES ON THE HOUSE VOTES TO SUSPEND/NOT SUSPEND THE MILITARY PIPELINE TO CHILE. SO FAR, WHETHER FOR REASONS OF PERPLEXITY, FATALITY, OR SATISFACTION WITH RECENT EVENTS, CHILEANS HAVE SO FAR RE-ACTED CALMLY TO THE NEWS OF THE INDICTMENTS AND DETENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. NEWS ATTENTION IS RETURNING TO MORE NORMAL CHANNELS: THE EARTHQUAKE IN THE NORTH, A LAN-CHILE CRASH IN ARGENTINA, AND THE MONTHLY INFLATION FIGURES. THE LETELIER/MOFFITT CASE REMAINS A MAJOR TOPIC, HOWEVER, AND AFTER TWO DAYS OF STRAIGHT REPORTING (EXCEPT FOR GOC-OWNED ORGANS), THERE ARE TODAY THE FIRST SIGNS OF NATIONALISTIC DEFENSIVENESS. "EL MERCURIO" GIVES MORE PROMINENT PLAY THAN MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN EXPECTED FOR A CHARGE COMING OUT OF HAVANA THAT THE CIA WANTED TO KILL FIDEL CASTRO WHILE HE WAS IN CHILE AT THE END OF 1971. A STORY FROM WASHINGTON
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THAT JUDGE BARTON D. PARKER MAY NOT ACCEPT THE AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND TOWNLEY ALSO RATED LEAD BILLING.

3. BOTH "EL MERCURIO" AND "LA TERCERA" HAVE EDITORIALS ON THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES, AUGUST 2, ON THE MILITARY AID PIPELINE TO CHILE. THE "EL MERCURIO" PIECE,

"LEGISLATING FOR THE WORLD," INVOKES THE ARROGANCE OF POWER THEME BUT ALSO POINTS OUT THAT THE HARKIN AMENDMENT IMPLICITLY DENIGRATES THE SEPARATION OF POWERS UPON WHICH THE CHILE AND US POLITICAL SYSTEMS ARE BASED. THIS IS SO, ACCORDING TO "EL MERCURIO", BECAUSE THE DECISION ON WHETHER TO EXTRADITE OR NOT IS STRICTLY A MATTER FOR THE JUDICIARY BRANCH WHILE MILITARY ASSISTANCE OBVIOUSLY GOES TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. "LA TERCERA'S " EDITORIAL, "JUDICIAL DISTORTIONS," ARGUES THAT THE IDEA UNDERLYING THE HARKIN AMENDMENT, THAT MORE PRESSURE WAS NEEDED TO ENSURE CHILEAN OBSERVANCE OF THE EXTRADITION TREATY, IS A SLANDER ON THE CHILEAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM. EX-NATIONAL PARTY SENATOR, PEDRO IBANEZ, IN AN INTERVIEW IN "EL CRONISTA", SAYS THE BACK AND FORTH HOUSE VOTES ARE ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF THE INSTABILITY AND CONTRADICTORY NATURE OF US POLICY. HE SEES SOME HOPE THIS MAY BE CHANGING IN THE OUTCOME OF THE FINAL VOTE.

4. THE GOC MEDIA ORGANS ARE GIVING EXTENSIVE PLAY TO THE VISIT OF US EVANGELIST REX HUMBAR. HE IS QUOTED UNDER A LARGE COLOR PHOTOGRAPH ON THE BACK COVER OF "EL CRONISTA" AS SAYING " I AM HAPPY IN A COUNTRY SO FREE," AND HE REPORTEDLY PRAYED WITH PRESIDENT PINOCHET YESTERDAY "FOR THIS GREAT NATION." (COMMENT: HUMBAR'S TV PROGRAMS ARE CARRIED HERE AND HE HAS A LARGE EVANGELICAL FOLLOWING. BY AND LARGE THE MORE FUNDAMENTALIST CHURCHES HAVE BEEN STRONGLY CONFIDENTIAL

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IN SUPPORT OF THIS REGIME.)

5. THE PRESS REPORTS COLONEL PEDRO ESPINOZA ARRIVED FROM PUNTA AREANAS YESTERDAY AND IS NOW DETAINED IN THE MILITARY HOSPITAL, ALONG WITH FERNANDEZ. MICHAEL TOWNLEY'S WIFE, MARIANA CALLEJAS, AFTER MANAGING TO KEEP QUIET FOR TWO DAYS MADE THE PRESS LAST NIGHT AND THIS MORNING WITH THE COMMENT THAT SHE KNOWS WHO LILIANA WALKER IS. THERE IS AN AP STORY OUT OF WASHINGTON SAYING THAT THE FBI HAS PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE "MYSTERIOUS WOMAN" AND USG LAWYER ETCHEBERRY IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IF LILIANA WALKER WERE IDENTIFIED HER EXTRADITION WOULD ALSO BE REQUESTED. THERE IS SOME PRESS SPECULATION THAT THE REASON FOR FOREIGN MINISTER CUBILLOS' CALL ON SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT BORQUEZ AUGUST 2 WAS BECAUSE OF A BELIEF IN THE JUDICIARY BRANCH THAT THE PREVENTIVE DETENTIONS WERE NOT CARRIED OUT CORRECTLY BECAUSE THE ORDERS DID NOT GO THROUGH THE JUDICIARY. (COMMENT: ETCHEBERRY SAYS THERE IS NO BASIS FOR THIS COMPLAINT OR BELIEF). SERGIO MIRANDA CARRINGTON HAS SIGNED ON AS CONTRERAS' LAWYER AND, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, HE WILL ALSO REPRESENT ESPINOZA. A RADIO BROADCAST THIS MORNING HAD MIRANDA CARRINGTON CLAIMING THAT TOWNLEY WAS

A CIA AGENT.

6. COMMENT: BY AND LARGE CHILEANS HAVE TAKEN THE INDICTMENTS AND PREVENTIVE DETENTION CALMLY. THERE HAVE BEEN NO WILD RUMORS THAT THE SKY WAS FALLING IN. OUR POLITICAL CONTACTS HAVE BEEN NOTICEABLY ALOOF. IN PART THIS IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ANTI-CLIMACTIC NATURE OF THE INDICTMENTS THEMSELVES. MORE TO THE POINT, THOSE WHO SUPPORT PINOCHET BELIEVE THAT HE NOW HAS A BREATHING SPELL PENDING PRESENTATION OF THE EXTRADITION REQUESTS. THOSE WHO SEEK PINOCHET'S DOWNFALL TEND TO BELIEVE THAT HIS FATE IS SEALED REGARDLESS OF HOW HE DECIDES TO HANDLE THAT ISSUE. IF HE EXTRDITES OR PERMITS HONEST TRIALS HERE, HE WILL BE VULNERABLE TO AN INSTITUTIONAL REVOLT FROM WITHIN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ARMY. IF HE DOES NEITHER, EXTERNAL PRESSURE FROM THE US WILL BECOME OVERWHELMING.
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